

to certify. Why will it be a factor, and how so?

The President. Well, first of all, let me reiterate, there is a process for doing this that has not been completed, and I have to get the recommendation first. But as I say, as a factor in the certification decision, I would imagine it is a mixed factor. On the one hand, it's troubling because we knew and it's been widely reported that local police organizations at various places in Mexico are highly vulnerable to all the money that was being thrown at them from the drug lords. And the military had been thought to be an anecdote to that, a counterweight. So it's troubling.

But on the other hand, I'll say again that they have not fooled around with this. When the President discovered it, he's taken strong action. It's been very public. It's been non-apologetic. And so I'm encouraged by that. So I would think that this would cut both ways on the certification question.

China

Q. Mr. President, do you see any change in policy with China now that Deng is dead?

The President. We expect basic continuity here. The Chinese, perhaps mindful of some of the problems they've had in their long history in transitions—Deng Xiaoping set in motion a process which has been well underway for more than 2 years now. So—and I think that that is something that we can all appreciate, that there has been a basic continuity there.

So I think that our policy is the right policy. We will continue to engage strongly with China. I look forward to all the meetings which are going to occur, including Secretary Albright's trip and then the Vice President's trip later and then the exchange of visits by the two Presidents. The policy we are following of engaging with China, to work where we agree and to honestly air our disagreements and work through them, is the right policy for the people of the United States and, indeed, for the world in the 21st century. If you imagine what the world will look like 30 years from now, 40 years from now, we can do nothing other than what we are doing. It is the right thing to do.

Second Term Cabinet Nominees

Let me just make one other comment here, because this came up at the last press briefing I had, about the status of our nominations for the Cabinet in the Senate. I have been gratified by the treatment that the Cabinet members who have been confirmed have received by both parties and the prompt dealing with their nominations. I said something about Mr. Lake when I last was with the press.

The only other comment I want to make today is there has still not been a hearing scheduled for Alexis Herman. I think that is a big mistake. She enjoys wide support among labor—the labor unions endorsed her yesterday strongly—and she has wide support among business. I don't know that there's ever been a person nominated for Secretary of Labor that had as much broad support in the business and the labor communities. She's clearly well-qualified. If anybody wants to vote against her for whatever reason, they're plainly free to do that, but she deserves a hearing, and if she gets a hearing, she's going to be confirmed. And I think Senator Jeffords is a good man and a fair man, and I believe he will give her a hearing. But it's imperative that it be done. It's now midway through February, and I think it's time to get on with this.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Bruce Vladeck, Administrator, and Bruce Fried, Director, Office of Managed Care, Health Care Financing Administration; and Gen. Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo, Director of Mexico's National Institute to Combat Drugs, dismissed for allegedly protecting a Mexican drug trafficker.

Remarks Announcing the District of Columbia College Reading Tutor Initiative

February 21, 1997

Thank you very much. Thank you, General Becton, for the introduction. Thank you, Principal Andrea Robinson, for making the First Lady and me feel so very welcome here in Garrison today. Delegate Norton, Mr. Mayor, all the college presidents who are

here, some out in the audience, but especially those here behind me who are part of our announcement today: Dr. Ladner of American University, Brother Patrick Ellis of Catholic, Dr. I. King Jordan of Gallaudet, Father Leo O'Donovan of Georgetown, Steven Trachtenberg of George Washington, Pat McGuire of Trinity, Patrick Swygert of Howard.

To the Council members who are here today, Hilda Mason and Harry Thomas, Judge Hamilton. To the School Board members who are here and others who are here who are part of our endeavor. I would like to especially acknowledge the Librarian of Congress, Dr. Jim Billington; the Secretary of Education, Secretary Dick Riley; Carol Rasco, the National Director of our America Reads program; Frank Raines, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget; and Harris Wofford, who heads our national service program.

I'd also like to thank Dr. Robert Corrigan from San Francisco State University, who is here. He and Father O'Donovan are two of the 21 steering committee members for our national effort to get volunteers in colleges all over America involved in helping our children to read. So I'm delighted to be here with this distinguished assemblage.

Two weeks ago in my State of the Union Address I spoke of the importance of renewing our great Capital City to make it the finest place to learn, to work, to live, to make it once again the proud face America shows to the world. This is a city of truly remarkable strengths. I saw that when I lived here as a student so very many years ago now. I see it now, having come back as President. We see the majesty of the monuments, the beauty of the parks, the commitment of community and business leaders. But most importantly, we see it in the eyes of our children.

I was just in Stephanie Abney's first grade class, where Hillary and I read "The Tortoise and the Hare" to the students, and they could have been reading it back to us. And I thought about those wonderful children and all the others who are here. They deserve the best future we can give them, and we can give them a better future. And that is what this is all about.

As the First Lady said, this endeavor will require us to be more like the tortoise than the hare. We will have to move slowly but deliberately, and we will not be able to sit down and rest. But if we do that, like the tortoise, we will win the race. This is our city. All of us who live here, all of us who work here, all of us who want America's Capital to be a world capital, second to none; all of us have an obligation to work with the mayor, with General Becton, with the control board, with Delegate Norton, with all the leaders of the city to help to renew and to revitalize Washington, DC. I pledge to you today that we, my personal family and my official family, will be with you as you make those efforts, every step of the way.

I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to three people who have been particularly important to me in this endeavor: First, to the First Lady who has been telling me for a long time that we had to do more, we owed it to Washington to do more and that we could do more. Second, to Frank Raines, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget who came up with the proposal we have made to relieve the District of Columbia of some of its unfair and unnecessary financial burdens and reallocate responsibility among the State and Federal Government. And third to a—I didn't know if she was here with us today, but I finally spotted her in the audience—to Carol Thompson Cole, Carol, thank you very much for all that you have done to help us to get this effort off the ground.

So we've made this proposal to the Congress to relieve the District government of some of its financial burdens. As I have said many times, one of the major problems of the District of Columbia is that it has too often been a "not quite" place. It's not quite a State, but it's not quite a city. So it has been loaded up with responsibilities that normally are only borne by States. I think that is wrong, and I think we should do better about that.

To strengthen the city's economic base, we also must provide some financial incentives for people to move businesses and to move themselves back into the city. We must expand the empowerment approach that has worked so well across the country. In De-

troit, one of our empowerment zone cities, the unemployment rate was cut in half in 4 years—in half—and investment was flooding back, business was coming back, people were coming back to live in the city. We can do this in every city in America, and we must.

To help home rule succeed, we have to change the relationship between the District and our Nation's Government. Sometimes the District gets the worst of all worlds. It's not quite independent, but the dependencies it has carry burdens that cannot be borne by any community. So we need to work that out.

But let's not kid ourselves, there are some things that have to be done here that must be done by the people of the District of Columbia. And the two that are most important in my view are making the schools work for these children and making the streets safe for them to walk and live on.

What I want to say to you today is that I know you can do this. I have been not only here at Garrison, but I have been in the Kramer Junior High School in Anacostia, which has been adopted by my Secret Service detail—it's one of the presents they gave me for a birthday once—best present I could ever be given by my Secret Service detail. And they go to Kramer—they're in there all the time. And I get regular reports about the progress they're making. I have been to Thomas Jefferson Junior High School, which is near the Capitol, probably 5 times in the last 10 years. I've been to Eastern High School and to a number of other schools in the District. You can do this. This school system can be great for all of its children, and what we want to do is to help.

I'd also like to say that you can do the other things you have to do, too. Public safety can succeed here. I started the week in Boston, where no child has been murdered in a year and a half, not a single child in a year and a half, not one. And no manna dropped from Heaven, no outside force lifted them up. They did some things together, in a disciplined, organized, determined way that changed the future of children. And now it can be done everywhere. So I am hopeful.

But let's begin with education. All of you know that the world we are moving toward will put a higher premium on education than

ever before. It has always been important. A certain amount of it has always been essential for people to get along in life. It is now more critical than ever before not only for the individual futures of every one of these little kids here but for how the rest of us do as well. For the skeptics who are about my age, I could only say that we ought to be working hard to give these children a good education so they will support us in our old age—[laughter]—in a style that we'll be comfortable with.

We can only be a strong, united community if we can educate all our people. If you look around—just look at these children today. America is building the most genuinely diverse democracy in all of human history. No one has ever tried to do this before, and we did it almost without thinking, just by being a nation of successive waves of immigrants. We became more and more and more diverse. And by continuing to advance the cause of civil rights and civil liberties, we've made different people more and more and more at home in our country. And then all of a sudden we wake up on the edge of the 21st century with four school districts in our country where children's native tongues number more than 100—in four different school districts.

This is a great challenge because all children, even of the same race and the same religious background, as every teacher could tell you, are different. All children are different anyway. And when you think of this diversity we have to manage, it's even a greater challenge. But it's also the greatest opportunity that has ever been served up to any people in human history. And if we seize that opportunity, if we prove that all of our children can learn and they can all be given opportunities and they can all make a contribution, we will be richly rewarded.

We know that there are some remarkable success stories in the District of Columbia, and we know the District's schools have to do better. That's why I am so grateful that, after a lifetime of service to his nation, General Becton has taken on yet another important challenge and a true act of patriotism. We are committed to supporting him.

We know that we have to mobilize people from all walks of life, and I was glad to hear

all the different volunteer groups recognized, particularly the seniors and the Vista volunteers and, of course, a great personal pride of mine, the AmeriCorps volunteers. And I thank some of them who are here today, and I thank them for being here.

We need to start with simple, clear goals that we know are important, number one, and, number two, that we can determine whether we have met. One of the real problems that I find in all human endeavors is that sometimes we don't clarify our goals and make sure we're going after the important ones. And then sometimes, even if we've got a good goal, we set it up so we never can tell whether we've met it or not.

One of our goals has to be to make sure every 8-year-old in this country can read a book on his or her own, and every 8-year-old in this school and every 8-year-old in this city can do the same in the next 4 years. That is a very important thing, and we can find out whether that is being done.

The Secretary of Education and I intend to make it possible for States and the District, by the year 1999, to give an examination to every fourth grader in reading and every eighth grader in math to see whether they know what they're supposed to know, based on national basic standards. And so we will know whether every 8-year-old can read in 1999. And we are being given a few years to get the job done. We also know that these children can do the job if they're given the support, the discipline, the love that they need.

But today, in America as a whole, 40 percent—4 of every 10 8-year-olds—cannot read as well as they should read. Now, part of that is because so many of them's first language is not English. But a lot of it is because—indeed, the lion's share of it is because they simply are not learning as they should. Many times the teachers have more than they can do. Many times the teachers don't have the support they need for all the different challenges that the children bring into the classroom in their early lives. Many times, as General Becton indicated, we need more help from the parents at home. Many times the parents themselves need help to learn to read well enough to read to their children.

So we know that this is a complicated problem. That does not, however, relieve us of the burden of solving it. In fact, what it does is impose upon more of us the responsibility to help to solve it. One of things—I'm glad to see my friend Bill Milliken here and I was glad to hear General Becton recognize the Cities and Communities in Schools program because they have for years in small rural cities in my home State and in big urban places like Washington tried to remind the community that our children are everyone's responsibility, and there must be a community approach to dealing with this.

And that's what we're here to talk about today with regard to a simple but profoundly important goal, that every 8-year-old must be able to read independently. We intend to use thousands of AmeriCorps volunteers to mobilize and train a citizen army of one million reading tutors. We want at least 100,000 college students to help, to build our army of reading tutors on college campuses all across America. That's what the America Reads program Secretary Riley and Carol Rasco are spearheading is all about.

Last fall, I worked with the Congress to create over 200,000 new work-study jobs on America's college campuses, the program that enables young people to work their way through college. My present budget calls for another 100,000 work-study positions to be made available to our college campuses. I want a portion of those new positions to be devoted to community service—to letting people work not just on the campus but, more importantly, in the community and especially teaching our children to read.

College presidents nationwide have answered the call. Many of them are here today, the local college presidents behind me, others in the audience. They have pledged thousands of their work-study students and thousands who do not receive work-study assistance to serve for one year as reading tutors.

The District of Columbia is rising to meet that challenge. Today, thanks to the support of General Becton and the willing leadership of the university presidents behind me, over the next 5 years, thousands of college students, AmeriCorps participants, volunteers, parents, and teachers will work together to

help DC's children learn to read so that they can meet that national goal.

The presidents of seven DC area colleges and universities—American, Catholic, Galaudet, Georgetown, George Washington, Howard, and Trinity—have pledged nearly 700 students next year and thousands of students over the next 5 years to serve as reading tutors in DC's public schools. And we should all thank them for it. And we should note, too, that there are several hundred students from these seven schools already working in our city as tutors and as other public servants.

These new tutors, the vast majority of whom will be work-study students, will begin in the 18 District schools General Becton has identified as most in need of this kind of partnership, including Garrison. But we hope the effort will expand to many more of DC's schools. In each of the 18 schools we will place two AmeriCorps participants who will work full time to coordinate the effort and recruit more volunteers.

I might say that one of the things I have learned in visiting schools all across America, in all different kinds of settings, is that it requires an organized effort by the schools to effectively use the volunteers, and sometimes volunteers aren't in the schools simply because the school either hasn't taken the time or doesn't have the resources to organize bringing them in and using them effectively. So that's one of the things that we hope we can accomplish with our AmeriCorps volunteers.

Finally, with the help of AmeriCorps and DC businesses, General Becton will open a family resource center in each school so that parents have the support and assistance they need to read to their own children, so that they can be the first and best teachers for our students.

After Hillary and I read the book to the 6-year-olds today—out of the mouths of babes—the children came up to see us. The first question they asked was, “Now, did you read to your daughter when she was a little girl?” [*Laughter*] “Every night,” I said. And the second question was, “Now, did your parents read to you when you were a little boy?” The first two questions they asked. So we

do have to make it possible for these parents to do their jobs.

That's another thing I've noticed over the years: Almost every parent, no matter how young they might be, no matter how uneducated they might be, desperately wants to do a good job. And we have to give them the resources to do it and the strength and self-confidence to do it.

Now, as I said, we're plotting out a race here for a tortoise, not a hare. This is not going to be done overnight. Children are not built in a day. But it is a very important start. To truly renew our Capital city, we clearly have to start with our children. With the creation of this new DC Reads partnership, thousands of college students and volunteers will help our public school children learn to read. In so doing, they'll be taking more responsibility for their city that has given them an opportunity to get an education. They'll be creating more opportunity for the children who live here. They'll be building a stronger and a better-prepared community for the 21st century.

I believe they will inspire this entire community to pitch in and work together to lift up the children of the District of Columbia and make this Capital worthy of its great heritage and the bright future of our Nation. We want to do more to improve education throughout the District. We'll offer more support to the Department of Education, to the District schools, sharing our expertise in a broad range of areas. Our Cabinet agencies will build on the many partnerships they've established over the past years. We'll continue to adopt schools, to donate computers and educational software and supplies, to become engaged ourselves as tutors and volunteers throughout the public schools. AmeriCorps will build on the work that it has done, not just in tutoring but also in repairing crumbling schools and correcting fire code violations so schools can open on time and recruiting even more volunteers.

But the most important work will be done by parents and teachers, by students and volunteers, by government and business working together. The spirit of common cause is how we must meet this challenge, and indeed all the challenges of the District of Columbia in education, in building safe streets, in eco-

conomic development, in restoring the health of the city's finances, and the proper balance of responsibilities between the city and the National Government. We are committed to this task.

Hillary and I are honored to be here with you today, and we thank every one of you for what you're doing to give our children the future they deserve.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in the auditorium at Garrison Elementary School. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Julius Becton, USA, (Ret.), superintendent, District of Columbia schools; Andrea Robinson, principal, Garrison Elementary School; Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton and Mayor Marion Barry, Jr., of the District of Columbia; Benjamin Ladner, president, American University; Hilda Mason and Harry Thomas, Sr., members of the District of Columbia City Council; Eugene N. Hamilton, Chief Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia; and William E. Milliken, president, Communities In Schools, Inc.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

February 15

The President announced that he selected Robert O. Harris to serve as Chairman and Anthony V. Sinicropi and Helen M. Witt to serve as members of Presidential Emergency Board No. 233, established by Executive order to investigate the dispute between American Airlines and its employees represented by the Allied Pilots Association.

February 18

In the morning, the President traveled to New York City, NY. In the evening, he traveled to Boston, MA.

The White House announced that the President will visit Denmark on March 21 following his meeting in Helsinki, Finland with President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.

February 19

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

February 21

The President announced his intention to designate Bill Joy as Co-Chairman of the Advisory Committee on High-Performance Computing and Communications, Information Technology, and the Next Generation Internet.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released February 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Mike McCurry

Statement by Press Secretary Mike McCurry announcing the President's upcoming visit to Denmark

Released February 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Mike McCurry

Released February 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Mike McCurry

Released February 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Mike McCurry

Acts Approved by the President

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.